

SYMBOLIC PROTEST OR FIGHT TO WIN?

Today is undoubtedly the most widespread strike action for years. With 24 public sector unions all striking on the same day, it is very welcome to see unions finally taking concerted action in this way.



However, it's also worth remembering that it will require much more than one day strikes to be sure of a real victory and today's action will definitely need to be built on. But whether the trade unions are capable of doing this, especially given the weak, legalistic tactics unions are so entrenched in, is doubtful.

But aren't the unions' tactics already having an effect?

True, there has been some movement from the government and employers in response to positive strike ballots but this is just conciliatory noises, a ploy to make the unions look inflexible while obscuring the fact that the government and employers are actually offering us *nothing*. The trade unions long ago surrendered to anti-union legislation and other oppressive employment laws and have got so used to doing everything 'through the proper legal channels' that they are now incapable of properly fighting to win.



But it makes no sense to do everything to the letter of the law because these laws were enacted *specifically* to hamstring *effective* industrial action.

If we want to be sure of a real victory, then we'll need to:

- **Intensify strike action** in spite of the anti-trade union laws and the reluctance of union high-ups to engage in action beyond anything purely symbolic
- **Spread the dispute** - it's essential that we take our struggle beyond the single issue of pensions. The way the unions have mobilised makes it seem as though it is indeed our pensions that are the central concern. This is far from the truth. The point is to show that workers reject the idea that we all have to make 'sacrifices' and to do so in solidarity with the whole working class, including unwaged people and service users. We cannot unite with the rest of the working class on the basis of a one-day strike over public sector pensions.
- **Unite with other workers** - that means broadening our aims to include private sector workers over a range of issues other than pensions.
- **Go wildcat** - in recent years, a number of disputes have bypassed trade union bureaucrats and we have seen a rise in forms of direct action that defy the unions' reluctance to defy the law. From wildcat strikes to workplace occupations, from blockades to technically unlawful secondary action, we have seen workers' refusal to submit being expressed in ways that the state and the employers have not been able to stifle.
- **Establish local strike committees** between workers from different unions and workplaces - controlled from below rather than by union bureaucrats above.
- **Link up with activists in the UnCut and Occupy movements.** It is 12 years since the famous N30 demonstration against the G-20 in Seattle. Since then, the global 'anti-capitalist' movement has pushed for fundamental social change. Such newer, international forms of protest should increasingly embrace workers' interests explicitly too.

What we in the Anarchist Federation are talking about is not only winning this particular dispute but also building an effective, militant and autonomous workers' movement that will set us up for future battles and future victories.

Meanwhile, the best way to guarantee any degree of success over pensions, privatisation, attacks on services, attacks on any section of the working class, is to make this strike as strong and effective as we can, to widen the issues and spread the dispute to other sectors.

So let's get to it and fight to win!

The Anarchist Federation is a growing organisation of anarchist communists who aim to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal world, without leaders and bosses, and without wars or environmental destruction.

Day to day, our individual members and local groups are politically active in many workplace and community struggles. We coordinate worldwide through the International of Anarchist Federations. As well as encouraging new members, we welcome ideas for joint activities with other groups.

We publish a regular paper, *Resistance*, a twice-yearly magazine *Organise!* and a series of pamphlets/booklets on a variety of topics.

Membership of the AF is open to anyone who agrees with our Aims & Principles and is willing to work within them.

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